DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 402 297 SP 037 056

AUTHOR Fenwick, Tara
TITLE Balancing on the Edge of Surprise: Managing Junior High Classrooms.
PUB DATE Jun 96
NOTE 37p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (24th, St. Catherine's, Ontario, Canada, June 4-7, 1996).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Environment; *Classroom Techniques; Foreign Countries; Junior High Schools; Junior High School Students; Secondary School Teachers; Self Efficacy; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Effectiveness; *Teacher Student Relationship; *Teaching Methods; Teaching Skills
IDENTIFIERS *Management Skills; *Management Styles; Nova Scotia

ABSTRACT

In an exploration of junior high school teachers' meanings of success, it was discovered that teachers tend to talk about their practice in terms of management strategies. Management was clearly significant for teachers as a metaphor for their ways of living, instructing, developing student responsibility, and building community within the fluid contingencies of junior high school life. However, management is a rich concept stretching beyond controlling routines and discipline to represent a way of being that teachers seem to have developed to live on the edge of surprise. This paper examines what teachers believe they manage in their daily work in classrooms with adolescents, and how teachers think about and use strategies in management. Three dimensions are presented here to convey the complexity and flexibility of teacher management and its strategies. First, teachers manage the space of the classroom, including its objects, movement, temporality, and history. Second, teachers manage the energy of people and pedagogy within this space. Third, teachers manage their own identity or the "teacher self" by adapting and shifting within this energy while remaining firmly anchored to commitment and a strong belief in purpose throughout the fluctuating realities of classroom life. (Contains 52 references.) (Author/ND)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED 402 297

# Balancing on the Edge of Surprise: Managing Junior High Classrooms

by

Dr. Tara Fenwick

St. Francis Xavier University

Dr. Tara Fenwick
St. Francis Xavier University
Department of Education
P.O. Box 5000
Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada
B2G 2W5

Telephone: (902) 867-5404
Facsimile: (902) 867-3887
E-mail: tfenwick@stfx.ca

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

T. Fenwick

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SP037056

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# Balancing on the Edge of Surprise: Managing Junior High Classrooms


## Abstract

While exploring junior high school teachers' meanings of success, one dimension that emerged was teachers tend to talk about their practice in terms of management strategies. Management was clearly significant for teachers as a metaphor for their ways of living, instructing, developing student responsibility and building community within the fluid contingencies that are junior high school life. However, management is a rich concept stretching beyond controlling routines and discipline, to represent a way of being that teachers seem to have developed to live on the edge of surprise. This article examines what teachers believe they manage in their daily work in classrooms with adolescents, and how teachers think about and use strategies in management. Three dimensions are presented here to convey the complexity and flexibility of teacher management and its strategies. First, teachers manage the space of the classroom, including its objects, movement, temporality, and history. Second, teachers manage the energy of people and pedagogy within this space. Third, teachers manage their own identity or the 'teacher self' by adapting and shiftingwithin this energy while remaining firmly anchored to commitment and a strong belief in purpose throughout the fluctuating realities of classroom life.

## Balancing on the Edge of Surprise: Managing Junior High Classrooms

The following snapshot of classroom life isn't necessarily dramatic or humorous, nor does it demonstrate particularly extraordinary students and teacher behaviors. But it does peek into one junior high school classroom on one winter afternoon:

> In this classroom the bulletin boards are carefully ordered, lined with special borders, posted with elegant signs and graphics displaying mathematics concepts. Fran is circulating quickly through the rows of desks, marking numbers down in her notebook when she finds someone who hasn't completed last night's homework. Students are wriggling and fidgeting. Two girls chat in low tones, one keeping her eye on the teacher's back as she moves up the aisle two seats over. A boy is tapping his pencil, turning in his seat to watch the teacher as she moves around him and up the next row. Another raises his eyebrows, his friend silently mouths a quick response, and gestures to a girl with his eyes. The girl scribbles a message on her book, quickly points at it when she manages to engage the eye contact of a neighbor, then hides the message under her hand.
>
> "Isn't that nice. ISN'T THAT NICE!" The teacher's voice slices through the murmur - heads lift to identify the offender and watch the drama unfold. Under her gaze, the boy puts his head down on one arm on the desk. "I'd hide my face too. And I wouldn't show it for a long time." She's stern. Under his arm, the boy turns his face to snicker silently at the boy beside him, then quickly hides it again on his desk. Fran has moved on to check homework. She pauses in her travels to lean over the boy. "I'm really surprised you wrote that," she says in a low voice. Three boys who have just shared a quiet joke to her left are grinning. Her head lifts to look at them briefly -- they return their eyes to their books. "That's enough, Jeffrey," she says suddenly, turning to a boy on the far right.
>
> -notes from research journal

This is one of dozens of classroom observations emerging from a study of teachers' work with adolescents in what had been nominated a "successful" junior high school (grades 7 to 9) in an Alberta city. Although the study explored many dimensions of schooling, teaching, and adolescents, this paper focuses on one aspect of junior high teaching that was central in teacher talk about their practice and relationships with students: classroom management. As I began to explore teachers' meanings and practices of "management", I found that for many, management strategies extended far beyond conventional notions of disciplinary tactics such as classroom routines and appropriate teacher responses keyed to student non-compliance and outbursts. Teachers talked about classroom management in rich ways that embraced or overlapped other dimensions such as caring, connecting,

evoking curriculum, ethics, socializing young people, creating community, and negotiating relationships built on what van Manen (1991) has described as pedagogical "tact" -- all within an implicit acceptance of the ultimate contingency, shifting boundaries, complex multiple meanings, and uncertainty of today's classroom life with adolescents. Effective teachers seem to have developed strategies for living flexibly in a postmodern moment while managing it.

This paper focuses on these junior high school teachers' understandings and strategies of management. I ask, what is it that teachers manage, and see themselves as managing? Three themes appeared to be entwined in these teachers' concept of management: managing classroom space, managing energy, and managing the teaching self. In the following sections I will first provide a brief overview of the study methods and background literature about classroom management, then describe the specific context of teachers and students in this study. Finally I will explain the three themes of space, energy, and self as dimensions of classroom management.

**The Study Methods**

The larger case study from which this paper emerges was undertaken in 1994-96 to examine a junior high school, a Catholic separate school in an Edmonton suburb, which had been identified as "successful" by representatives of the community and district office using a variety of indicators: above-average overall student achievement and attendance, many new innovations in programming, a healthy fiscal situation, and a perception of strong school leadership and "good" teachers. The study explored two main questions. First, what teaching practices, social and organizational processes, cultural structures and characteristics of student life fostered the overall success of this particular school, as defined by the people making up the school? Second, what meanings of adolescence and learning were embedded in the processes, structures, and relations of this school? I was one of a three-member research team.

The method used was qualitative case study research based on observation, interviews, and study of documents (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1984). A team of three researchers visited the school for an

equivalent of about 40 full school days. Student activity was observed in classrooms as well as hallways, playground, the library, and the gymnasium. Teachers and support staff were interviewed frequently in open-ended conversations that explored their understandings of student instructional and developmental needs, individual diversity, distinctions between groups of students, and teachers' descriptions of their own practice in conjunction with adolescent characteristics. Administrators were interviewed to explore school structures, culture, policies, leadership, and the underpinning philosophies of working with adolescents. Classroom observations were scripted, and interviews were transcribed. The data was analysed interpretively and hermeneutically to explore the school's success along three basic dimensions: the school's administration (including organization, leadership, and school culture), the dynamics of adolescent students with teachers (including their needs, identities, relationships, etc.), and teacher practice.

To explore teachers' practice and their meanings of this practice, we observed classrooms, then usually interviewed teachers immediately afterwards to explore their classroom reasoning and the meanings they ascribed to the dynamics we had seen and heard. We asked questions such as, I noticed that you . . . What were the reasons for your choices at that time? or, What were you thinking when . . . ? or, What was going on when the students were . . . ? This research strategy has become popularly associated with uses of narrative to explore teacher knowledge. Elbaz (1991) claims that "the story is the very stuff of teaching . . . teacher knowledge in its own terms is ordered by story and can best be understood in this way" (p. 3). Elbaz suggests that "story" with its flexible open-ended form is one of the most effective entries to understanding teacher knowledge because story is not linear and fixed, does not assume an authoritative narrator, and does not present universal truth claims. What we found is that teachers talk strategy as much as they narrate stories of their moments with children, and that when teachers talk about strategy they adopt an expository discourse, becoming very clear about the moral foundations and practical logic governing their choices. Carter (1994) has developed a research approach that we adapted for this study, helping teachers to probe the "well-remembered event" to gain insight into what they know and how their knowledge changes with experience. Carter's approach is based on two assumptions: (1) teachers' knowledge is essentially structured by the events they



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

experience in the complex social situations in which they teach, and (2) teachers' knowledge is organized into explanatory frameworks that serve as interpretive lenses in comprehending their experiences. Like Carter, we tried to uncover multiple dynamics of classroom events and teacher intervention through both observation and analysis of how teachers interpret events they consider particularly salient.

**Background on Teacher Management Strategies**

Management is conventionally viewed as one of the most perplexing and difficult aspects of teaching practice, yet one of the most important for pedagogical success, that teachers 'must' learn (Lasley, 1994). Effective management strategies developed and used by teachers have received ample attention in literature analysing classroom life or offering prescription (Lasley, 1994; Denscombe, 1985; Rinne, 1985; Coloroso, 1982). McLaughlin (1994) maintains that a significant part of this literature describes management in terms of rules, disciplinary action and ways of shaping student behavior to produce obedience, responsibility, and solidarity. Techniques that prove 'successful' for managing student behavior in large groups have traditionally been collected from observational research and shaped into formal principles that may be dispensed in teacher education. Such techniques include ways to create and implement specific workable classroom rules, understanding when and how to use both low profile and high profile responses to student misbehavior, using "withitness" and "proximity" control, and working with parents in dealing with chronic severe misbehavior. Lasley (1994), for example, suggests a focus on 'teacher as technician' to 'equip' teachers with a well-defined checklist of specific tactics to control student idiosyncracy and maintain order.

The assumptions of 'order' and 'control' underpinning conventional notions of teacher management have occasioned much ongoing debate which continues today. Bullough (1994) complains that industrial metaphors such as the 'factory', grounding educational thought since the 19th century, have succeeded in producing a teacher sense of self as controller of students. This sort of repressive classroom management approach has been thoroughly attacked by critical theorists arguing for student liberation (McLaren, 1989; Shor and Freire, 1987), a position which itself has been

critiqued by feminist post-structuralists (Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1992) who wonder just who is presuming to liberate whom for what purpose. Foucault (1977)'s critique of institutional practices, such as the continuous 'panopue' surveillance and regulation at the site of the body which characterize classroom management, focuses on the production of docility and the ways such practice controls the flow of power and knowledge. Denscombe (1985) laments that despite such critique, teachers continue to rely on three management strategies that have traditionally been used to minimize uncertainty, keep 'order', and reduce reliance on personal charismatic authority: domination, classroom management (teacher-led instructional strategies and group strategies to utilize the threat of work or testing to keep them busy and control their action), and co-optation (student "voluntary" participation in sports etc. to maintain existing social order).

The complexity of teacher strategy and management has recently become better-documented through research employing methods of narrative (Elbaz, 1991; Carter, 1993) and teacher lore (Schubert and Ayers, 1992) to uncover multiple dynamics in the classroom space. What Clandinin and Connelly (1990) call "personal, practical knowledge" of teachers is strategy as an improvisatory art that cannot be considered separately from the teacher's sense of self, intuition, intention, body, relationship, history, values, and perception of present context. Johnson (1989) argues that a teacher actually comes to know the classroom not just cognitively, but in and through the body: its scripts, routines, images, cycles, and rhythms (p. 367). Much teacher knowledge, claim some writers, is developed and functions at a tacit level of understanding of adolescents, of what works, of the school culture and tradition, of the underlying tensions and dynamics rolling about in the classroom space (Millies, 1992; Jagla, 1992).

To think of strategy -- which normally indicates pre-planned tactics -- as embodied knowledge opens new areas for exploration of classroom management. Embodied knowledge may not be transparent to the conscious intellect, but is internalized at deeper levels than the rational understanding that planned 'strategy' may connote. Embodied knowledge may invoke teacher capacities that not only may be unknowable, but whose very effectiveness depends on their resistance to analysis and

categorization. Teachers do not apply rules like 'technicians' but continually move, sense, act, create, and continue to move among others while constantly adjusting understandings: Hill (1994) explains this as embracing continual "surprise" as a way of being. Teacher strategy is also situational and can only be understood in particular physical, relational and socio-cultural contexts. Recent work in "situated cognition"[1] helps move analysis of teacher strategy and management practice altogether out of the instrumental realm of labeling and disseminating "good" technique, focusing on classroom 'problems' that need to be 'solved' to assert 'control', to locate understanding of classroom management as a particular nexus of context, knowledge, and intersubjective encounters. Actor-network theory also offers theoretical dimensions that help expand analyses of classroom life and the unfolding of teacher strategy[2] . Pile and Thrift (1995) state four primary characteristics of this kind of thinking about how practitioners like teachers come to understand and choose action within their immediate worlds: (1) Understanding (and therefore strategy) is created *within conduct* itself, which flows ceaselessly, which is adaptable but not often deliberately intentional, and which is always future-oriented; (2) Understanding is essentially corporeal, often "beyond the reach of consciousness and explicit statement" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 63); (3) Understanding is worked out in 'joint action', always binding the actor to others in shared understandings of what is real, what is privilege, what is problem, what is moral; and (4) Understanding is situated and cannot be abstracted from its constituting time and space.

---

[1]The work of Lave and Wenger (1991) offers a framework for understanding the dynamics of any context as it shapes the actor-knower's strategy. They maintain that people's knowledge in any particular situation is intimately entwined with the particular tools (objects and their meanings, symbols, linguistic signs), the particular community (both the actor's positionality within this community and the shared meanings comprising their beliefs, values, assumptions, power dynamics), and the particular activity (including the social relations and approved purposes and norms of practice).

[2]Emanating from geography and thus relying heavily on metaphors of space, movement, maps, and time, actor-network theory developed by writers such as Law (1994) and Latour (1993) examines regional flows of action. Knowledge is assumed to be constituted in social networks spread across space and time, and individuals learn as they move through a network. Individuals experience the network's knowledge as they participate in its spatial and temporal arrangements. The space-time arrangements of a classroom have physical and symbolic dimensions, representing to individuals what they are supposed to do in a space and how they should use their time (including notions of who/what is not supposed to be there).

Understanding teacher knowledge as both embodied, contextualized, and particular opens the concept of management and its strategy to represent something much broader than the deployment of teacher intentions to discipline and control. Dimensions of energy and space, as well as movement and relations, can enhance understandings of teacher management as practice in what Lyons (1990) calls "the web of teachers' work and development of teacher knowledge". To understand why this teacher has made this particular choice of action in this moment among these particular children, whether consciously or unconsciously, the moment itself becomes problematic. The actors and their space are linked through multiply-constructed dynamics in which jostle various histories, social and object relations, desires and fears, movements and practices. All these flourish in and partly construct the larger system (the school structures, constituent families, values, cultures, communities, currents of power and resources) against which this moment is foregrounded. But to understand a classroom moment, its history and geography must be explored. I turn now to context, to prepare the canvas for the portrayals of classroom life which I will sketch later in this paper.

**The Context of the Teachers in this Study**

Three dimensions of context are discussed below to provide some background for examining the meanings and moments of management with which this study is concerned. These contextual dimensions are the characteristics of the school, the adolescent students, and the teachers' intentions.

Characteristics of the school

About three hundred adolescents attend the junior high school (grades 7 through 9) featured in this study. The school emphasizes achievement (demonstrable through grades) as well as orderly conduct, structure, and general tidiness. Visible symbols underline the importance of orderly planning, observable achievement, and the significance of teachers in the school. A wall near the main entrance displays a picture and student-written description of each teacher and support staff member in the school. Goals for the school and its students are developed by staff each year and listed in some classrooms; posters throughout the school encourage values of hard work, courage, risk-taking, and

success; teachers' personal mission statements are displayed in their classrooms; hallway and classroom walls are covered with students' creations, neatly arranged; lists of students who have "made" the honor roll are posted prominently in classrooms. Student movement is controlled by school bells; lockers are situated together at one end of the school. The school motto is "the bridge to the future".

Characteristics of the adolescent students in this school

To understand why teachers in junior high classrooms do what they do, a preliminary question is, what do adolescents do? How does a group of approximately 30 urban Canadian adolescents behave in a junior high school classroom? Of course, wide variation exists. Boys, girls, Monday morning or Friday afternoon, different sizes and shapes, moods and personality, developmental stages, backgrounds, social positioning of the moment, beliefs and cultural identity -- all influence adolescent behavior. Teachers in this study described adolescents as experiencing confusing physical changes and growth spurts, inner tensions between needs for autonomy and needs for dependence, anxiety about appearance, experiments with humor and personality roles, identity confusion, intense and transient wide-ranging emotional experiences, and new demands for responsibility and interpersonal skills. Three characteristics of adolescents' behavior in classrooms in particular emerged in the observations of this study, which were confirmed by the teachers as especially significant in their meanings and practice of classroom management. These characteristics were students' continual physical energy, their playfulness, and their need for connection through peer communication.

*Continual physical energy.* As the script excerpt at the beginning of this article shows, one of the most striking characteristics of a group of adolescents compelled to situate themselves into a typical desks-and-chairs classroom was what appeared to be a constantly bubbling cauldron of physical energy. Many of them chewed and tapped pencils, drummed the tops and kicked the legs of their desks, rattled objects in their pockets and pencil cases. Energy was expressed through voice as well as motion, giggling, sometimes screaming, blurting out non-verbal sounds of mock pain, disgust, satisfaction. Some junior high students were more physically and vocally expressive than others,

dialogues are one example. Throughout class activity, glances and gestures, even note-passing, were exchanged in a complex set of silent messages. Whenever the teacher relaxed strict enforcement of silence, many adolescents immediately began to talk. Teachers monitored the noise level of the talk ("Okay, you people, that's enough") but admitted that it was almost impossible to keep students "quiet" for an entire class period. When the class buzzer sounded, talk and laughter erupted instantly as students gathered in small groups to connect for three precious minutes before the next class began. Outside the formal class time, most students gathered in tight clusters, facing inwards; sometimes talking or shoving or laughing, sometimes just standing together and looking about at the world outside their group. Inside the classroom, various groups gathered fleetingly then released through a flow of gaze, object exchanges, gestures, and other messages sent and received in communicative networks that flowed underneath the tight classroom structures erected by the teacher. It was as though the structures of separate chairs-and-desk units and the routines of independent class work continually tried to pull adolescents apart, a movement which they resisted by continually trying to pull back together into strong units.

*Adolescents in community/ies* Adolescent energy, playfulness, and need for connection is partly a function of students' development, and partly a response to the schooling environment. Teacher management strategies interact with the adolescent group, shaping and being shaped by student responses. Just as adolescents bring a certain agency into the intersubjective moments woven in a classroom with the teacher, teachers also enter the dialectic with desires and agendas. The lesson plan structures the agenda for instruction and learning, and the teacher's vision of the student's future provides the ground for management strategy. Both are mutable among the living dynamics of the classroom: both management routines and lesson plans become fluid when they contact moving, thinking, feeling, responding adolescents.

One of the paradoxes that exists in classroom space is the desire for students to belong, to participate in communities of practice. The teacher's role is supposedly to groom adolescents for fuller participation in the wider society where teachers themselves are situated as responsible compliant


BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"insider" participants, a community which is yet vague and far removed from the adolescent's immediate world of practice. For the adolescent, the communities of practice in which she and he desire fuller "legitimate participation" (Lave and Wenger, 1991) are various overlapping clique groups and sub-cultures comprising the broader peer community of the student culture. Actions which qualify a youngster as a fuller participant in this adolescent community (note-passing, rough-housing, testing the rules, creating diversion, being 'cool') often contradicts the behavioral norms designated and enforced by the teacher. In other words, in order to move centripetally towards the center of peer communities, the adolescent sometimes must move centrifically away from the center of the teacher-constructed classroom image of the adult community looming in the adolescent's future. Some students appear to be non-participants in the adolescent community: they sit or stand alone in non-classroom school hours, and during class time they are ignored and inactive in the covert communication and diversions. Other students play the role of active defiance to the culture represented by the teacher's structures, practices and discourse: thus they are still connected to this community participating as outside resistors. But most adolescents try to balance participation in both the fugitive peer community and the officially sanctioned classroom community, moving as nomads in different trajectories *between* while co-existing in different positionalities *within* multiple communities of practice.

Characteristics of teacher intentions

What do teachers fundamentally want to happen through their interactions with adolescents? Teachers referred frequently to the "future" for which they were preparing their students. While there was the immediate future of successful completion of the curriculum. Teachers also spoke explicitly of the junior high school and their classrooms as preparation places: readying adolescents for the demands of high school, the demands of the workplace, the demands of society. These values were explicit in what teachers said was most important to teach adolescents. These values also seem to govern teachers' classroom rules and behavioral routines, and their responses to students in attempts to shape behavior.

Respect for other people, including people's personal space and property, and others' authority where relevant, was a central value described by many of the teachers. Another was accountability: teachers often referred to students' need to learn to take responsibility for their duties, and to accept the consequences of their actions and speech. "Hard work" was a phrase used frequently by the teachers. In the school setting "hard work" refers generally to student willingness to attend and concentrate, and diligence in completing teacher-prescribed independent (paper-and-pencil) assignments. Hard work seems to be perceived as a reliable pathway to success. Teachers also believed students needed to learn to "do what you're told", a value of compliance reinforced by much teacher talk and action. Learning to control one's body and voice to create a work environment that is predominantly quiet, still, and orderly appeared to be a primary value generating most classroom routines.

These teachers looked at adolescent students with a complex gaze. While many teachers saw and appreciated the young person as he or she is to be celebrated in this moment, teachers also saw a vision which the youth may not have been able to comprehend: the image of the young person in the future. Teachers' experience of their own and others' learning and development provided them with images of this struggling child eventually understanding concepts that she believes she will never understand; of this screaming adolescent becoming more settled and responsible; of this dependent frightened adolescent finding strength and identity. This image-of-future-adult is imposed on the present in a tension that must be constantly balanced, expressing itself in choices of action surrounding teacher expectations: when to nudge and nag, when to accept and when to let be what simply is. We found many examples of teachers celebrating the present moment with their adolescent students, appreciating young people for who they are now, and being present to share the moment with the other rather than shaping the moment to discipline the other. Juxtaposed images of learner-present and learner-future are common to all pedagogical situations. The difference in adolescence is the unpredictable and dramatic shifts day-to-day from extremes of behavior, attitude, and even conceptual knowledge.

Teacher management, then, must be understood within the context of adolescent behavior in the schooling context, teacher visions of the future (expressed partly as expectations) for the adolescents, adolescent responses to these visions, and the teachers' management of the gap between present and future. This management was manifest in teachers' continual balancing of the contingency of the present, and their invocation of and prodding students towards a future in a complex moment-to-moment web of joint actions, interpretations, responses. There were no completely consistent management strategies that teachers appear to use in a predictable correspondence of cause-effect to produce certain desirable outcomes in their classroom. Instead, teachers "managed" the way a surfer "manages" a sailboard: the surfer must find a way to balance her weight and position the sail into the wind to keep the board moving in the direction she has plotted, while keeping herself upright. The water currents under her feet and the wind eddies around her body and sail are constantly shifting, and she must develop a bodily "feel-sense" for the delicate balance she needs. If she pushes too hard in her attempt to control the board the wind will pull the sail away from her, she'll lose the mast and topple into the waves; but if she doesn't set her course and deliberately tack and swing around, the sailboard will follow its own course and head out to the blue yonder. It is to this issue that I turn next, outlining three dimensions that appear to constitute the skilled surfing which teacher management strategies embody.

**Teacher Management Strategies**

In sorting through the dynamics of context and relationships, and the intersection of these with teacher intentions and interpretations, three distinct but interrelated and interplaying elements emerged that teachers "manage". First, teachers were *managing the space* by organizing objects, coordinating people's movement, creating the central structures determining practice and values, and shaping the community that unfolded in the classroom. Second, teachers were*managing the energy* by balancing the various dynamics of adolescent emotion and physicality to create a psychologically safe place, while stimulating student interest and maintaining a "flow" of engagement in classroom activity. Finally, teachers were*managing the self* .in a dynamic that appeared crucial to teacher effectiveness: the

ability to shape a strong but flexible teacher identity in relation to students. Teachers who considered themselves successful and who enjoyed their work with adolescents must balance care for themselves with care for their students. Teachers must balance and manage their own role and positionality in shifting relations with individuals and groups of students, their own personal psychological involvement with students, and their strong personal values and beliefs with an ability to float and play moment-to-moment. Each of these dynamics will be discussed in the paragraphs following. Although I now pull these out separately to explore and highlight their characteristics, it must be remembered that their interrelated and dynamic nature makes their absolute separation impossible.

Managing the space

Teachers managed space through planned arrangement of objects and routines, controlling time and coordinating movement towards a pre-determined outcome -- such as completing yarn paintings. Teachers also managed space through their moment-to-moment gestures and utterances, inviting and directing, soothing and inciting, representing and shaping the classroom flux an artistic improvisation. In choosing their responses teachers balanced many contradictory demands, from adolescent needs for freedom and play to the overriding rigidity of the short time periods and general expectations of orderly, tidy space and activity. Each teacher idiosyncratically and apparently intuitively worked out this balance, in ways that often amazed the researcher-observers. While appearing completely immersed in concentrated exchange crouching beside a small group of students, a junior high teacher would simultaneously continue her flow of directives to other individuals outside the group, pointing, shrugging, raising eyebrows, shaking a head, suddenly standing to remonstrate a particular girl on the other side of the room.

> In this art classroom a light hum of "work chatter" prevails as students, seated in pairs, work on their yarn paintings cutting and gluing. A handful of students are standing or moving around the room, getting more yarn, washing the glue off their hands at the sink, wandering over to see a friend's painting. Janine, the art teacher, is hard to locate. Right now she's crouching at a desk explaining something in a low voice. Then she moves over to sit with a girl, helping her to glue her yarn in a spiral. "Who stole my glue?" calls another girl."Who stole my scissors!!" yells a boy. "You've got my scissors - gimme 'em back!" This is all rather playful, and unfolds without teacher interruption. Another boy lightly circles a friend's neck with his arm and gives him a "noogie" - rubbing his scalp with his fist. A girl off to the side is talking about the next class, Science. She's explaining a problem to two


BEST COPY AVAILABLE

> others, using her arms to draw a picture in the air. Two boys in front of her turn around, and one asks her a question. She proceeds to explain : "To move to a place...to move to a place where different seasons change". She quizzes the boy: "And stimulus is?..." He answers, and the third boy opens his text to check it. One boy is dancing around tapping the desks as if they were drums: "Hey, when am I gonna get my turn? I've just got one little question," he sings. Without a word, Janine moves quietly over to this boy, leans over and listens to him describe the effect he's trying to produce, then takes up some yarn and shows him how.
>
> -notes from research journal

Teachers spoke in terms of "my classroom", and most of their talk about teacher-practice was situated in the space of their classrooms. The space of a classroom comprises the physical space, which is small relative to the number of bodies in motion that must be coordinated within its parameters, and the inanimate objects which are interrelated with the people of classroom in various activities. Classroom space also includes the visual space and its definition and management through lines of gaze. Thrift and Pile (1995) argue that the 'look' which configures visual space carries within it position, distance, and orientation which inscribes different meanings and power into the space. The teacher's gaze defines and separates students, confers approval and demarcates the behavioral 'objects' of disapproval.

Trajectories of movement and practice of students and teacher is entwined in the dynamics of space, on which is overlaid teachers' attempts to author classroom space through structures of activity and discourse. When identifying dimensions of human space, Thrift and Pile (1995) show the usefulness of the work of Toger Hagerstrand, a Swedish geographer. Hagerstrand shows how all practice unfolds in spaces which he characterizes as "situated interdependence", where trajectories of different bodies -- people, machines, furniture, instructional materials -- jostle in time and space. Teachers determine rules and routines which, in the classroom of an experienced teacher, function almost invisibly to display teacher expectations for behavior, and to control student movement and distribution of materials. Teachers also intentionally create physical structures (i.e. arranging desks, sequencing activity, keeping a blackboard list of "problem students") that encourage or repress certain behaviors. Structures of discourse embedded in teacher directions and responses to students emphasize particular values and expectations (attention, order, accountability, hard work, responsibility, mutual respect, etc.), make clear what sorts of action are considered legitimate, and disregard as invisible

those layers of activity and relations (covert student exchanges, peer group hierarchies, sexual conflict, etc.) which are not granted legitimate status in the classroom space. The immediate pragmatic constraint is safety for all, and coordination of movement so that students can complete the tasks designed by the teacher. But at the same time, teachers want to encourage "appropriate" levels of student spontaneity, creativity and expression. In managing the classroom space, therefore, teachers are confronted by several tensions that they must orchestrate simultaneously.

*The classroom space as "safe place"*

One tension was embedded in the notion of "protection". Teachers talked about wanting to create a "safe place", a haven that one teacher thinks of as a "home" for the kids. Safety was understood in a psychological as well as a physical sense. Fran said, "No kid will ever be laughed at while I'm around." Matt stressed that kids need to know there's a place where they don't have to worry about being slow, or being different -- that all kids can expect to be treated fairly and equally by the teacher and, to the extent the teacher is able to enforce such values, by their peers while they are in that teacher's classroom. Kathy would not tolerate any bullying, "tattling", or other particular behaviors that she deemed harmful to students while they are in her room. But there were "little squabbles that go on all the time", some escaping the teacher's notice, others too numerous to apprehend. Like other teachers, Kathy selected certain rules of safety to enforce, infringements of which she was constantly alert to catch and "deal with". These rules created emblems representing general ethical principles that become valorized through her repeated emphasis of them. One example in Kathy's classroom was the privacy rights of personal property. She frequently mentioned to students the importance to her, and therefore in her classroom, of "leaving other people's things alone". She made "a big deal" out of instances where students used her things without permission, which included any objects in the classroom that were not part of students' property, including the blackboard. She helped students develop a certain caring for their own objects, such as their binders and other instructional materials which she insisted they organize and keep neat. She talked of taking pride in keeping the school tidy and free from graffiti. Anyone caught writing on desks was publicly

remonstrated and made to scrub them clean. Kathy had developed various strategies to "deal with" infringements of the private property rule, designed to impress into students the importance of this value. When a student's pencil case went missing, the entire class was held after the bell until the culprit stepped forward to return the item: "peer pressure goes a long way".

Thus, to create a space where safety is guaranteed for all students casts the teacher in a constant place of tension: the warm caring values she extends must be enforced through surveillance and disciplinary action taken against those who disturb the safety as the teacher has defined it. Punishment requires the teacher to be "the heavy", disrupting the warm safe climate she wants to generate and withdrawing protection from at least one student, the desk-writer or pencil-case thief, who is temporarily cast outside the safe circle of teacher-classroom space. These contradictions thrive together. To the observer, it is impossible to determine a student's sense of the overall climate of the classroom space: does the adolescent in fact experience the classroom as a warm "safe place"? To us as partial and limited researchers who parachute in to this complex classroom reality, the space in fact seems 'cold'. Our attention is drawn to what appears to be teacher's continual directives, controlling gaze, punitive responses to students, public markings drawn to this person or that misdemeanor. It took us several visitations before we became alert to the flow of student activity carving out their own dwelling places and social spaces, that appeared to exist almost in a 'third space' of the classroom dynamic.

*Balancing work and play, quiet and talk*

A second tension in managing space arises from the ambiguity surrounding the image of the ideal environment for instructional "work". Order, stillness, and quiet was an implicit goal, evident in the stream of teacher directives to keep adolescent talk and movement to a minimum. Teachers also generally shared a belief that learning should be active, that adolescents should be encouraged to engage bodily and emotionally as well as cognitively with the conceptual material to be learned. Kathy talked of her struggle to understand "where to draw the line" with student talk. During independent "seatwork"-type activity she believed the ideal environment would be one of complete quiet to allow

concentrated thought, but she learned that this was an impossible ideal for adolescents. So she was constantly maintaining her tension on the reins controlling the chatting, listening for the hum of "good talk" (the teacher's sense of work-related murmurings), and quick to recognize and admonish off-task hubbub or the seed of disruptive talk.

Following from this dimension of work was the genuine desire on the part of most teachers for adolescents to have fun, to enjoy some of the activity in the teacher's room. Balancing 'work' which is expressed in expectations and structure, and play which unfolds in relaxed structures and permissiveness, is a tension of managing the classroom space. Teachers whose classes seemed to 'flow' effortlessly had deliberately created multiple structures: physical structures to organize movement and objects as well as temporal structures to regulate pace and student attention to task. But too much structure inhibits play. Matt said, "The worst legacy I could leave as a teacher is having students walk into a high school English class and say, 'I hate Language Arts'". Sometimes teachers created diversion by spontaneously switching the classroom discourse structures from expository or procedural to narrative. Many knew the value of story-making and story-telling as a way not only to gather students' attention but also to share themselves in a moment linking students and teacher. Gudmundsdottir (1991) writes about story-telling as powerful curriculum, sharing pedagogical content in a space honoring narrative ways of knowing.

Adolescents seek fun too, and are constantly attempting to create diversions which, when unchecked, can produce a directionless and fragmented pandemonium that even adolescents will admit is "not fun". Thus the teacher must create an activity which is engaging and 'fun' for students in a legitimately curricular sense, while managing the space of 'fun' by repressing actions that 'ruin the fun' for everyone else. This was often accomplished through subverting the multiple structures that functioned to contain the energy of the student 'fun', and minimizing the amount of teacher intervention required to maintain prevailing order. Janine, the art teacher, created a highly structured physical space: all materials were sorted, labeled, and numbered into special containers located in various (labeled) areas around the room. The temporal space was also structured: students were taught

to expect that following ten minutes of explanation where they were to remain silent and listening in their seats, they were to retrieve materials in a particular sequence, place them in particular work areas, and commence work on the project. For the 30 minutes of 'play' (in one case, creating a string painting which students appeared to enjoy doing very much), the goal of completing a personal artpiece motivated student focus on the activity. Janine then relaxed and becomes almost invisible in her presence, allowing students to move freely around the room getting more materials, chatting and helping one another, until the final ten minutes of clean-up. Suddenly movement and time was once again rigidly structured, each student had been taught to do a particular chore, each object had a proper place, and the entire space had to be numbered and ordered before students are allowed to leave.

Teachers also talked about knowing when to relax and "have fun" with the class, and when to "sit on them". Ricardo joked with the kids, teasing them and laughing at their own jokes -- when these were not hurtful to others or interrupting those classroom times Ricardo had designated for purposeful work. The boundaries separating work time and play time were rarely mentioned explicitly, but all students seemed to be aware of them. This was evident when observing students who engaged overtly in play with the teacher at certain times of the class, who at other times endeavor to keep hidden from the teacher their covert play with one another. Ricardo indicated he was aware of much of these snatched moments of 'fooling around' but didn't choose to make a deal out of it. If students were finishing their 'work', if the hubbub was kept relatively low, and if Ricardo's explicit directives for that period of time were being followed, he was satisfied.

*Balancing student responsibility and external control*

A third tension of classroom space concerns the paradox inherent in the role of schooling itself. Teachers are charged with the foundational responsibility of ultimately shaping students to be personally responsible and independent in a system enforcing compliance to teacher authority. Teachers thus must create classroom structures through clearly stated expectations enforced by routines and consequences for misdemeanors which encourage students to comply with societal norms of what it means to be "responsible", then gradually move students away from dependence on external

enforcement of these norms. In the classroom setting, "responsibility" generally means students remembering to bring materials to class, disciplining themselves to do assigned work in their out-of-school (non-surveillanced) time, and regulating control over their own desires not to conform to the stipulated guidelines of behavior. Kathy talked about "weaning" younger adolescents from their reliance on the teacher authority to discipline their own and others' failure to comply with the teacher's clearly stated expectations: "I don't want to get involved in every little mishap . . . they have to start dealing with their problems." Teachers monitored students regularly (glancing at everyone's homework) to remind them that their inner discipline "counts" -- they were accountable for their actions. But teachers also tried to minimize their interference in student's own developing discipline: "With the 9's, I expect them to do more, and I try not to sit on them as much," explained Kathy. The balance between encouraging student agency to regulate their own behavior and taking charge to enforce crucial expectations was played out in a tension of teacher strategy that was adjusted according to observation of students, intuition, and judgment moment to moment.

Thus, when teachers managed the space of a classroom they were engaged in balancing many tensions simultaneously: the tension between protecting and punishing students to create a 'safe place" for all; the tensions between 'work' and 'play' embodied in the manipulation of structures; and the tension between teacher control and student agency in constructing the space. The point of drawing attention to these tensions was not to highlight the conflict inherent in them, as if to show junior high teachers as existing in a continual state of irresolvable dilemma. Rather, these tensions seemed to function in teachers' management of classroom space the way sewing machine tension allows a successful balance of both top- and under-threads in a particular texture of fabric that is fed into the machine to be joined in a balanced seam. Teachers are guided partly by a vision of the direction of the seam they want to construct, and partly by their "feeling-sense" of the dynamics of the actors and objects interrelating in the space confronting them. Essentially then, in managing the classroom space teachers are manufacturing a culture. It is the teacher's role to valorize certain value-laden normative practices and objects, to erect and maintain the borders of temporal, physical and relational structures that govern student movement and power dynamics, and to construct an official discourse that embeds

directives and norms while creating safety and rapport, and delineating play. At the same time, teachers are alert and responsive to the texture of the space that unfolds in everyday life with adolescents. Teacher management strategies are embodied in the moment-to-moment choices they must make to balance allowance of students' rights to "be" where they are as adolescents struggling in a particular stage of development, and to shape these adolescents according to the teachers' vision of where the adolescents are moving. This balancing act is the gentle art of managing the energy.

Managing the energy

Adolescent energy is well understood by anyone who has worked with or parented youngsters at this stage of development. Koerner's (1992) notion of "the body electric" seems to capture the fidgety restlessness and what seem to be raw, unpredictable spurts of mood and behavior that bubble in complex dynamics underneath the tidy classroom structures. Teachers interacted with this energy within the relatively small confines of a classroom: thirty bodies in a small square space crammed with desks, chairs, and other instructional paraphernalia.

> There were a couple of kids that are really -- they're not bad, they just have lots of energy. They blurt out and it's taken me a long time to get them. Once they came in here just screaming, loud. So I sat them down and at the end of the day we got up, we walked out, we walked in. And I said, "If you cannot come into my classroom quietly, we'll do it ten times on a Friday". --Kathy

Kathy restored the desired classroom atmosphere of calm, predictable routine by enforcing the boundaries and using repetitive drill, both to explicitly teach the required behavioral norms and to reinforce her authority to create unpleasant consequences for lack of student compliance. But teachers were not inflexible drill sergeants. Much allowance was made for students; a space was carved out within the classroom structures where student energy could be expressed. The difficulty for teachers in managing this energy was drawing the boundary around this energy and managing its fluctuations.

*The unpredictability of classroom energy*

One issue in student energy was its unpredictability. Teachers talked of a class of students who on Wednesday were "just great", presumably meaning cooperative and engaged, then on Friday

"they're wild". Teachers came to expect certain things from certain age groups ("the grade 9's come in, sit down, open their books, and wait") but were often surprised. A class that was more or less "doing what they're supposed to" could suddenly erupt: "You're trying to have a discussion and suddenly you've got five discussions going on and papers turning and notes writing --". What worked with the morning grade 8's usually worked well with the afternoon 8's, but one day for some reason the activity "bombed" in the afternoon. Teachers said they needed to watch and interpret the energy continually, alter their plans, react spontaneously to surprises, and make choices to act and speak quickly and constantly. Some of these choices were rational and pre-meditated, others were intuitive. Teachers talked of the "feel" they got for a class, an embodied holistic way of being with and in the energy dynamics, interpreting and responding with what Cervero (1992) calls "wise judgment" usually without the benefit of temporal or spatial distance from the energy for reflective consideration.

*Focusing the energy*

Another issue teachers talked about related to managing energy was adolescent predilection to be easily distracted. Keeping students' wandering attention focused and their energy "on-task" required many teacher strategies in different situations. Matt and Ricardo both referred to keeping the pace (flow of conceptual material and number of activities per period) moving quickly to keep students engaged, although this pace must be monitored and continually adjusted or some students will become "stuck" (on an unfamiliar term or a snarl in an assigned task) which is "their cue to go off-task". The teacher's gaze controlled attention. As Fran said, "you have eyes in the back of your head" to catch wayward attention, but more importantly to let students know that the panoptic surveillance (Foucault, 1977) is constantly vigilant. Teachers directed students to remove from their visual and tactile access any objects that may distract their attention away from the teacher's voice ("Pencils down and binders closed, please", "Eyes up here, everyone").

*Being flexible and making exceptions in managing energy*

A third issue is the teacher's own sense of contingency in managing student energy. Although teachers stressed the importance of "consistency" when stating their expectations to students, establishing and maintaining structures of routine and order, and responding to student behaviors, teachers were flexible. All demonstrated their sensitivity to the particular dynamics of this student in this moment, like the boy who seemed to accomplish little in the class but did sit still and refrain from "bothering" others, which the teacher explained was an accomplishment for him. Teachers understood and made "exceptions" for student differences in personality, capability, stage of maturity, and their daily moods. When asked about any one child, most teachers were able to switch completely from a discourse totalizing a particular group as "this class", and talked about "this person" and her needs, her own struggles, how she was different today than yesterday, her home life and friends, her special gifts, her predilection to follow directions or not, ask questions or not in class. Thus seated like a bifocal within the teacher's disciplinary gaze of "this class" today and its behavior relative to the normative practices enshrined in the teacher's expectations, was also the teacher's caring gaze at "this [special] child". Tension in this balance arose precisely from choices about where to allow the exceptions: what degree of variation within the desired norm is permissable as an aspect of qualitative difference among individuals? what deviations and fluctuations around the behavior boundaries are permissable as part of human fallibility, and especially adolescent shifts? But all teachers noted that students "need a break", a second chance. In fact, contingent management of energy allowed teachers to demonstrate a value that many appeared to share: we're all human, teachers make mistakes or forget things too, forgive other people, admit your own error and decide to do better next time. But permissiveness functions effectively only in an overall set of clear structures. As Ricardo stressed, "breaks and second chances without expectations and challenge lead to anarchy."

Part of contingency for some teachers was recognizing their own different responses to situations on different days: "Some days you choose to deal with it and other days they're not bothering anyone and I let it go and monitor it the next day and take it from there." Matt liked "to say

'yes' a lot", giving students permission for exceptions to the rules he had created. Teachers explained their varied responses in terms of deliberate strategy to manage the energy without squelching it. Students who were completely quiet, obedient, and attentive caused some teachers to actually worry. Matt said the objective was "a flow of energy", a rhythm in and out of the prescribed activity where students were engaged and enjoying themselves, where teacher and students cooperated together and were responsive to each other's signals, where both work and play wove together in the classroom space. "I've been really tolerant with them, I've been on their case but I've been really giving them an opportunity to settle down . . . but some days they just holler, they're just blurting out -- So I'll stop. . . . It's been a struggle." Always the struggle is between applying external control while promoting internal discipline, enforcing structures or relaxing them, allowing students to be in the present while nudging them ahead in their development towards the desired future. Teachers must adopt a position that is continually on the move, floating, strong and visible but never anchored to one immutable spot.

*Introducing energy*

A fourth issue in teacher management of energy, ironically, is introducing energy into the class. Just as sometimes teachers needed to calm or stifle the exuberant energy of adolescents, at other times they had to generate it. Matt explained that you have to "keep the flow going". The general flow of the class drooped when students got bogged down in directions, or couldn't find personal relevance in the main agenda, or when personal issues overwhelmed their attention. Teachers who worked so hard some days to keep five discussions from erupting on other days were working to spark sufficient student energy to get a discussion going at all. "It's like pulling teeth" say some teachers, conjuring images of painful resistance, and painting students as anesthetized or perhaps terrorized patients submitting body parts to surgical removal. All teachers know learning means being engaged; but adolescents sometimes simply slump and tune out. Teachers then resort to strategies designed to stimulate interest (sudden changes in routine, provocative questions or objects, creating suspense), enforce physical involvement (directives to move, switching to new activity), or arouse student emotion (laughter, fear, revulsion, etc.).

Finally, in managing student energy many teachers used various systems of record-keeping. A behavioral infraction or missed assignment might be jotted on the teacher's chart; absences were noted; students who would be kept for detention for failure to comply might be listed on the blackboard for all to see; points were accumulated for student success; descriptive notes recorded incidents invoking disciplinary reaction. Records are helpful, explained teachers, as "evidence" for students and their parents, a sort of audit trail fixing the flow of classroom moments into a continuous narrative over historical time. Records constructed a story that both demonstrated student progress over a specified time period (report cards) and illuminated behavioral patterns. Teachers used records as reminders to students that their efforts, infractions, lapses, laziness, successes -- all the fragments of today's fits and starts of energy -- "count", that they were not forgotten, that they accumulated in a coherent thread telling the story of "what you did" in this classroom. Despite the time, organization, and diligent maintenance required to keep such records, most teachers appeared to find this investment of teacher time to be worthwhile aspect of their practice. Perhaps the creation of such records was one way of anchoring the mutable classroom moments, of finding some stability in the ephemerality of adolescent energy and the day-to-day contingent management of this energy. The records although *of* students, seemed to be kept not *for* students but for teachers, an issue which touches on strategies employed by junior high teachers in managing their own sense of self.

Managing the teacher self

Recent teacher stress studies indicate serious difficulty experienced by classroom teachers, who often feel loss of hope, loss of control over working conditions, and loss of self (Jevne and Zingle, 1994). Yet the junior high teachers in this study appeared to genuinely enjoy their work with adolescents amid the tensions, contradictions, and uncertainty forming the dynamic webs of energy of everyday classroom life. A question that begs to be asked of these teachers is, how do you manage your sense of self?

Even though we didn't ask teachers directly about their teaching self in the interviews for this study, many talked about their self in relation to the ambiguity, contingency, and multiplicity of the

environment in which they floated. What was most striking was teachers' apparently vivid sense of identity in their work, which was reflected in the entire construction of the classroom space. Teachers seemed acutely aware of the significance of their shaping influence on adolescents' attitude and morality, and understood themselves as making an important contribution to their students' lives. Some teachers referred to returning students whose tributes or memories of their classes had reinforced this belief in the teacher as a significant and far-reaching influence.

*Strong sense of a teacher self and values*

Most teachers stated clearly the essential beliefs and values that they modeled and taught explicitly in their classroom practice. They had developed a strong sense of their personal boundaries, and were very clear about what behaviors they would and would not tolerate in the classroom space. Some would explain the teacher image they deliberately constructed for their students: Matt presented a self that was "non-threatening, non-judgmental, someone who would always take time to listen." Fran was pleased in her reputation as a fearful authoritarian who was "strict and makes you work hard", because she could then build on certain student expectations. This idiosyncratic teacher self was intimately related to that teacher's management strategy. Fran used strict control techniques with a 'tough talk' presentation that in the hands of a different teacher might have been threatening and even abusive. But Fran's strategy unfolded in fondness and respect for her students, and their complete trust in her to help them excel. Matt's more laissez-faire approach with students was crucially grounded in their faith that he listened whenever they needed to talk, and took their issues seriously. Some teachers talked about disclosure: how much of the "caring personal sense of self" a teacher should reveal had to be balanced with the need to maintain an authoritative distance. Working from Lacan, Taubman (1994) shows how this very issue of teacher distance is settled at a some midpoint between two poles: the teacher's infatuation for the student, moving towards what would be dissolution in the other represented by the student, and the teacher's alienation from the student in the role of master-authority, needing the student's gaze to maintain this ego and its distance, and complete the teacher's sense of identity. Each teacher must achieve what Taubman (1994) calls "the right

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

distance" between their teaching self and the big Other represented by a class of individual students, in whose gaze the teacher self emerges and in whose care the teacher's focus of commitment is immersed.

*Comfortable with balance in caring and controlling*

Part of the teacher identity is developing comfort with one's authority. As various studies on teacher's understandings of classroom management have noted, teachers hoping to establish "legitimate authority" often feel a tension between wanting to be caring yet maintain control over events in classrooms.(Denscombe, 1985). Beginning teachers especially, suggests Denscombe, often struggle to resolve the desired sense of teacher self as caring or nurturing, and their perceived sense of the classroom requirement for a controlling teacher self. Those who begin with students too permissively in an effort to be "nice" can be faced soon with student energy running wild and creating situations that schools identify as discipline problems. The teachers in this study didn't refer to this struggle. They seemed to have accepted their role as a legitimate authority, as controller in the classroom, and they didn't necessarily view the role as inconsistent with their genuine caring for each child's needs and growth. Teachers did not express doubt about the structures implicit in the very system of schooling, about what was worth knowing or doing, about their right to control knowledge production and labor distribution in the class, about their 'sovereign' subjectivity as deciding the meaning of adolescent's behaviors in the classroom. In the environment of ultimate uncertainty that is adolescence, these teachers seemed relatively sure of their foundational values, and secure in the knowledge that they generally did the right thing. Teachers talked positively about discipline and their practice as disciplinarians, as something much different than stipulating regulations and enforcing student compliance through reward and punishment. The teacher does not impose discipline so much as become enmeshed within it along with the students. Mutual respect was both the compelling force and the implicit objective in classroom discipline. As Ricardo explained, "I have to respect that in being disciplined and in disciplining them, I am asking for their respect for others...That's what discipline is. It's not control, it's order. Order for others... Structure allows freedom."

*Present to the moment*

Part of freedom is learning how to be with students in the present, in the here-and now. Many of the teachers in this study demonstrated a playful sense, laughing with students, celebrating small triumphs of the everyday, attending to needs (like the day of the grade nine immunization when teachers tried to round up some teddy bears when it became apparent that certain students were genuinely frightened by the imminent ordeal), and generally appreciating the energy, imagination and dramatic shifts of the young people they see everyday. As Matt explained, "I help them over the bumps, I try to be immediately present so they'll talk. I'm a resource to them, I take the time to listen." To listen in such a way as to be truly present with adolescents meant to learn how to 'read' what they were doing and saying before responding, for many contested meanings were embedded in their daily joint action. A girl is shrieking while a boy looks on and laughs: is she truly annoyed? has she provoked him? are they enjoying a mutually pleasant encounter? is this the first time today someone has shown her attention? Teachers in this study genuinely talked about adolescents as though they identified with them: they did not refer to their teacher self as being positioned in opposition or conflict with students, but in alliance with student difficulty. They empathized with the complexity of adolescents' experiences in school, they recognized the incommensurability of students' current needs and capabilities with teachers' behavioral expectations, and they sought to understand students' motivation and meanings in particularly perplexing encounters with them.

*Comfortable with self as "becoming"*

When teachers talked about the movement of their students, they included themselves: "we're making progress." In fact, teachers seemed to view themselves as well as their students as involved in a process of 'becoming'. They referred to their own continuing growth, and appeared comfortable questioning their own choices of strategy ("I think I might have handled that better") without endangering their strong sense of teacher self. There was embedded in this stance a healthy sense of hope in the certainty that forward progress was certainly being made, balanced with the attention to the here-and-now immediacy of the adolescent present. There was also, in the view of oneself as always

becoming, a reconciliation to the undecidability and continuous perplexity of surprising encounters with adolescents that comprises teaching life. Good teachers seemed not to care about control and definition of this life, so much as becoming more and more comfortable managing the space and energy within it.

*Management: a practice without language*

Teachers often didn't have a language for the specific strategies tacitly embedded in their practice through which they managed the classroom space and the energy. "I don't know how to explain it, I don't know what I'm doing" observed Matt, "but I guess I must be doing it because it works." Teachers talked fluently about their choices and rationales in designing classroom structures and constructing instructional plans. Teachers also explained certain techniques in moment-to-moment classroom response that they've found useful and apply deliberately in particular situations. But in the everyday "floating" management of classrooms full of adolescents and contradictions, when teachers' practice produced the almost "magic" flow of energy, orderly yet permissive space, mutual respect, student engagement and achievement evident to an observer, they often weren't able to articulate the multiple interpretations and choices, positional orientations, and bodily responses that were presumably being processed at an intuitive level in the teacher's consciousness. Their knowing was immersed in the body and senses, embodied and enacted in a surrender to the joint action that improvised classroom life, released from what Varela (1995) calls "the clutches of the grasping mind" (p. 254).

But what satisfied teachers did verbalize with ease and grace was their strategy, and the moral foundations to which this strategy was tethered. Teachers talked with certainty of the value system to which they pledged allegiance, and which they endeavored to model personally and inscribe in their practice. Teachers were clear about the roots of their commitment to their students, not simply to care for them and teach them whatever curriculum was provincially prescribed, but their commitment to share these values of right and reasonable living with adolescents. Experienced teachers also revealed clarity about their own preferences and limits of tolerance, and their rights to apply these boundaries to

demarcate the classroom activity. In this study, teachers often stated general principles of their practice with confidence and a certain pride: "They have to learn to respect the other person...I just won't tolerate bullying", "I believe students need to have challenge, and clear expectations...", "I think neatness is important, and I teach them how to organize their notes and things . . .", "They have to learn to do what they're told." Such principles, constructed through a repertoire of experiences and interpretations, indicated teachers' firm sense of self as legitimate and competent editors of the unfolding text that was classroom interaction.

**Conclusion**

This essay is first and foremost a testimony to the difficulty of representing with any authenticity the perplexing and constantly shifting everyday reality that junior high teachers manage. This reality slides underneath linear linguistic boundaries, resisting any static explanatory representations. This reality also resists the motive to capture and intellectually control what is essentially material, a fluid ontological energy, what Borgmann (1992) calls "focal reality". The energy is contained only by the spatial and temporal limits of the classroom space. This energy may not have a logocentric center, but it seems to have a heart that one can talk about in terms of commitment, hope, and the core values governing teacher practice such as respect for others, responsibility, accountability, and hard work.

The challenges posed by adolescents in classroom groupings observed in this research study -- their physicality, search for unpredictability and diversion, and their need to connect communicatively -- are met by teachers in a complex set of tensions and contradictory demands. The tensions explored in this essay have been mapped in three separate dimensions of management: managing the space, managing the energy, and managing the teacher self. In the classroom space teachers strived to balance order and stillness with activity and play. Teachers tried to create a safe place where inhabitants felt protected, which demanded discipline of the complex urges and cravings experienced by all. Teachers simultaneously had to produce this disciplined work space through external control while promoting student agency to choose and direct their own actions. And in their endeavors to encourage student

independence and self-governing responsibility, teachers had to minimize the very control of the classroom space which helped shape student responsibility.

The energy of the classroom was unpredictable, and largely produced by the mix of particular students in particular moods, positioning themselves in different ways to each other and the teacher according to the variety of intersubjective dramas being played out on any given day in the course of development. Teachers had to balance their charge to subvert and sublimate student energy towards societally-approved purposes, with their own sense of allowing adolescents to be, to act out and live through the reality of their moments without always framing this moment as deficient by comparison to a vision of the desired future. Teachers also worked not to squelch student energy, but to maintain its flow. Often this meant enlivening student energy, relaxing controls, and encouraging play.

In managing the self, teachers learned to balance their desire to be caring and nurturing with a legitimate sense of self as authority, as author of their classroom space and its energy. They also had become confident in the reality of a stable core of values, which could be named and used to structure much of classroom life. Teachers appeared comfortable with the contradictory coexistence of this stability with an acceptance of their essential mutability, their "becomingness" as teachers, their continual striving to understand by risking new actions, confronting error, and interpreting moments that redefine themselves. What seemed to remain unshaken in these junion high teachers was their commitment to their work, a work that could finally only be named as finding the right place to live moment to moment between appreciating an adolescents' present being and shaping adolescents' future towards a vision grounded in moral certainty.

In managing these three elements of space, energy, and self, teachers seemed not to seek control and fixity so much as they strived to float or roll within these tensions. "Float" seems better than "balance" to describe how teachers move back and forth from pole to pole in their negotiation among all of these tensions, sometimes evoking either external or implicit structures, sometimes rescuing and other times letting go of students, sometimes focusing on the here-and-now and sometimes wrestling students towards the future. But "float" should not imply that teachers remained

aloof and apart from the material classroom reality: when teachers floated, they sailed directly into its waves and wind currents. Perhaps the most significant theme to emerge in observation and teacher description of their classroom management practice was their comfort with contingency. Teachers continually adjusted the logic of their choices, not sporadically according to whim, but with thoughtful rationale responding to individual needs confronting them, interpreted within larger understandings of priority and the meanings of the present. Good teachers didn't avoid the anxiety of classroom unpredictability and undecidability, but seemed to demonstrate what Caputo describes in radical hermeneutics as "readiness for this anxiety. . . the readiness to be shaken, the openness for differance" (Caputo, 1987, p. 263). This readiness seemed to be a "feel-sense" rather than a formal understanding, oriented towards living within, celebrating the spontaneity and making sense as you go. Teachers didn't appear to define their strategy in terms of seeking 'solutions' to clearly defined problems. Instead, teachers seemed to accept the inherent difficulty of teaching. They dealt ultimately with the incommensurability of competing demands and the tensions of contradictory desired ways of living in the classroom through their embodied action, which somehow transcended their intellective description of strategy.

Perhaps teacher management practice cannot be rationally codified, broken into lists of discrete competencies that can be taught to new recruits, and measured through performance observation. It appears that teacher management is almost impossible to observe at all, given its embeddedness in so many overlapping and intangible classroom dynamics, some moments of which are incomprehensible without understanding their historical links or immanence in imaginatively constructed future orientations. As researchers we need to be astute and self-reflexive in probing teacher strategy. We must recognize the ultimate absurdity of any attempt to establish a single coherent meaning for the perplexity of strategy exercised in classroom life, or to reduce strategy to competencies and technologies taught to student teachers. We also, I believe, need to look beyond teacher-student relationships to other cultural dynamics when attempting to understand the multi-dimensional meanings and unfoldings of management. The braided dimensions of space, energy, and teacher self elaborated in this essay help open a way to conceptualize classroom management to accept the undecidability of

tensions in a schoolroom filled with adolescents. More important, this essay opens a language that can help name and honor the embodied magic of junior high teachers, propelled by commitment to clear values and a presence in the here-and-now moment, managing within essential contingency.

References

Atwell, N. (1987). *In the middle: Writing, reading, and learning with adolescents.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Blackman, C.A. (1989). Issues in professional development: The continuing agenda. In Holly, M.L. & McLaughlin, C.S. (Eds.), Perspectives on teacher professional development (pp. 1-19). London: New York.

Boreham, N.C. (1992). Harnessing implicit knowing to improve medical practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 55* , 71-78.

Borgmann, A. (1992). *Crossing the postmodern divide*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The logic of practice.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bullough, R.V. Jr. (1994).Digging at the root: Discipline, management, and metaphor. *Action in Teacher Education*, 16 (1), 1-10.

Caputo, J. (1987). *Radical hermeneutics.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Carter, K. (January-February, 1993). The place of story in the study of teaching and teacher education. *Educational Researcher, 22* (1), 5-12, 18.

Carter, K. (1994). Beginning teachers' knowledge of classroom events. *Journal of Teacher Education, 44* (3) 223-232.

Cervero, R.M. (1992). Professional practice, learning, and continuing education: An integrated perspective. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 2* (2), 91-101.

Clandinin, F.M. & Connelly, D.J. (1990, June-July). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 2-14.

Coloroso, B. (1982). *Discipline: Winning at teaching without beating your kids.* Boulder, CO: Media for Kids.

Cusick, P.A. (1973). *Inside high school: The student's world.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Denscombe, M. (1985). *Classroom control.*. London: George Allen Unwin.

Elbaz, F. (1991). Research on teacher's knowledge: The evolution of a discourse. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 23* (1), 1-19.



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Ellsworth, E. (1992). Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy. In C. Luke and J. Gore (Eds.), *Feminisms and critical pedagogy* (pp.90-119). New York: Routledge.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish* (A Sheridan, Trans.) London: Allen Lane.

Gallwey, W. T. (1974). *The inner game of tennis*. New York: Bantam.

Gore, J. (1992). What can we do for you! What can "we" do for you? Struggling over empowerment in critical and feminist pedagogy. In C. Luke and J. Gore (Eds.), *Feminisms and critical pedagogy* (pp. 54-73). New York, NY: Routledge.

Grumet, M. (1987).The politics of personal knowledge. *Curriculum Inquiry, 17* (3), 319-329.

Gudmundsdottir, S. (1991). Story-maker, story-teller: Narrative structures in curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 23* (3), 207-218.

Harrington, H. (1994). Teaching and knowing. *Journal of Teacher Education, 45* (3), 190-198.

Hill, A. (1994). Surprised by children: A call to pedagogical possibilities. *Canadian Journal of Education, 19* (4), 339-350.

Jagla, V.M. (1992). Teachers' everyday imagination and intuition. In W.H. Schubert & W.C. Ayers. *Teacher lore: Learning from our own experience* (pp. 61-80). New York: Longman.

Jevne, R.F.J. & Zingle. H.W. (1994). *Striving for health: Living with broken dreams.* Edmonton: University of Alberta Press.

Koerner, M.E. (1992). Teachers' images: Reflections of themselves. In W.H. Schubert & W.C. Ayers. *Teacher lore: Learning from our own experience* (pp. 44-60). New York: Longman.

Kohlberg, L. (1973) Continuities in childhood and adult moral development. In P. Bates and K. Schaie (Eds.), *Life-span developmental psychology: Personality and socialization.* New York: Academic Press,.

Lasley, T.J. (1994).Teacher technicians: A "New" metaphor for new teachers. *Action in Teacher Education, XVI* (1), 11-19.

Latour, B. (1993). *We have never been modern*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation* . New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Law, J. (1994). *Organizing modernity* . Oxford: Blackwell.

Lyons, N. (1990). Dilemmas of knowing: Ethical and epistemological dimensions of teachers' work and development. *Harvard Educational Review, 60* (2), 159-180.

McLaren, P. (1989). *Life in schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education* . New York: Irwin.

McLaughlin, H.J. (1991) Reconciling caring and control: Authority in classroom relationships. *Journal of Teacher Education, 42* (3), 189-195.

McLaughlin, H.J. (1994). From negation to negotiation: Moving away from the management metaphor. *Action in Teacher Education, XVI* (1), 75-84.

Merriam,, S.B. (1988). Case study research in education: A qualitative approach. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Millies, P.S.G. (1992). The relationship between a teacher's life and teaching. In W.H. Schubert & W.C. Ayers. *Teacher lore: Learning from our own experience* (pp. 25-43). New York: Longman.

Nias, J. (1991). How practitioners are silenced, how practitioners are empowered. In H.K. Letiche, J.C. van der Wolf & F.X. Plooij (Eds.), *The practioners' power of choice: In-staff development and in-service training* (pp. 19-36). Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger.

Noddings, N. (1988). *An ethic of caring and its implications for instructional arrangements. American Journal of Education, 96* (2), 215-230.

Pile, S. & Thrift, N. (1995). Mapping the subject. In S. Pile & N. Thrift (Eds.), *Mapping the subject: Geographies of cultural transformation* (pp. 13-51). London: Routledge.

Rinne, C. (1985). *Attention*. Columbus, OH: Charles Merrill

Schon, D.A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner*. New York: Basic Books.

Schon, D. A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner: Toward a new design for learning and teaching in the professions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Schubert, W.H. & Ayers, W.C.(1992). *Teacher lore: Learning from our own experience*. New York: Longman.

Shor, I. & Freire, P. (1987). *A pedagogy for liberation: Dialogues on transforming education*. New York: Bergin and Garvey.

Shulman, L.S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, February 1986, p. 4-14.

Taubman, P. (1992). Achieving the right distance. In W.F. Pinar & W.M. Reynolds (Eds.) *Understanding the curriculum as phenomenological and deconstructed text* . (pp.216-236). New York: Teachers College Press.

Tremmel, R. (1993). Zen and the art of reflective practice in teacher education. *Harvard Educational Review, 63* (4), 434-458.

Van Manen, M. (1991). *The tact of teaching: The meaning of pedagogical thoughtfulness*. London, ON: The Althouse Press.

Varela, J. (1995). *The embodied mind*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Weinstein, C.S., Woolfolk, A.E., Dittmeirer, L., & Shanker, U. (1994). Protector or prison guard? Using metaphors and media to explore student teachers' thinking about classroom management. *Action in Teacher Education, XVI* (1), 41-54.

Yin, R.K. (1984). Case study research: Design and methods. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.